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HIMMLER AND THE MACHINERY FOR GERMAN RESETTLEMENT

Description

This report describes briefly the work of the Staff Headquarters for the Strengthening of German Folkdom, an agency headed by Heinrich Himmler.

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SUMMARY

1. On 7October 1939, Heinrich Himmler was appointed Reich Commissar for the Strengthening of German Folkdom, with the mission of resettling "all Volksdeutsche from abroad who return to the Reich permanently." In order to accomplish this assignment, a special agency with the status of a Main Office of the SS was created, composed of eight subordinate offices and aided by machinery set up in the annexed provinces. The new agency, coordinating the activities of many existing immigration, labor, and financial offices, had as its chief aim the provision for those resettled of property and economic conditions roughly equivalent to what had been left behind.

2. According to an official German broadcast, Himmler's Office for the Strengthening of German Folkdom succeeded, from 1939 to 1944, in resettling into "the safety of the Reich" 908,000 persons from Latvia, Estonia, the Soviet-incorporated Polish provinces, Bessarabia, Northern and Southern Bukovina, and the Black Sea area. In order to make room for the resettlers, a ruthless policy of deportation and expropriation was inaugurated in Poland at the expense of the Jews, the Polish intellectuals, clergy, middle class, and, later, the farm population, while various high SS leaders were reportedly being presented by Himmler with confiscated estates in occupied Poland.

I. ORGANIZATION

On 7 October 1939, shortly after the conquest of Poland and the outright incorporation of large sections of that country into Germany, Heinrich Himmler was appointed by Hitler to the position of Reichskommissar für die Festigung des deutschen Volkstums (Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of German Folkdom).[1] His task was defined as the supervision of the "resettlement of all Volksdeutsche from abroad who return to the Reich permanently."[2] According to the Nationalsozialistisches Jahrbuch for 1941, since "common blood and folkdom should possess a common homeland," the Volksdeutsche in the Baltic countries and from the former Polish territories of West Ukraine and White Russia were to be removed from these lands and resettled in the area newly conquered for the Reich.

At the same time a special agency was operated called the Stabshauptamt für die Festigung des deutschen Volkstums (Staff Headquarters for the Strengthening of German Folkdom), as head of which Himmler named SS Brigadeführer Ulrich Greifelt. The entire organization, under the direction of Himmler in his capacity of Reichsführer SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei, had the status of a Main Office (Hauptamt) of the SS.

According to the most recent information available, the Stabshauptamt was composed of the following Ämter (offices), with Chiefs as indicated:

Siedlungsamt (Resettlement Office); Sturmbannführer Dr. Stier

Amt Personal-Abteilung (Personnel Office); Obersturmführer Graf

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1. Nationalsozialistisches Jahrbuch, 1941, p. 194.
2. Neues Bauerntum, November-December 1939, pp. 294-295.

Amt Registratur (Registrar); Obersturmführer Schuh

Amt Bauten (Buildings Office); Sturmbannführer Noell

Planung und Zentralbodenamt (Planning and Central Soil Allotment Bureau);

Oberführer Konrad Meyer

Amt Finanz (Finance Office); Oberführer Schwarzenberger

Rechtsabteilung (Legal Matters); Hauptsturmführer Dr. Wirsch

Sonderreferat Italien (Special Sub-Section for Italy); Schuhmeier

Machinery was also set up in the annexed provinces themselves to take care of the resettlement. The Governors of the incorporated provinces of Gau Danzig-West Preussen and the Warthegau were appointed deputies of the Reich Commissioner, and a high SS official was assigned to each of them.

The main task of the Commissioner for the Strengthening of German Folkdom was promptly to assign a suitable and constructive field of activity to those resettled, and to provide each with property. The new economic conditions for each of the Volksdeutsche were to be as nearly as possible equivalent to those left behind.

The Office for the Strengthening of German Folkdom was chiefly a coordinating body. In order to carry out its mission, it secured the co-operation of a number of agencies which were already functioning. Among these were the Reichsstelle für Raumordnung (Office for Space Planning); the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle of the SS (Vomi - Central Office for Ethnic Germans), charged with the immediate evacuation of the various German minority groups and with the investigation of resettlement possibilities; the Deutsche Einwandererzentrale (EWZ - Central Immigration Office), composed of representatives of all organizations and offices dealing with immigration, the function of which was the investigation and selection of evacuees; and

the German Ministry of the Interior, entrusted with the immediate duty of naturalization of the Volksdeutsche. Other agencies which cooperated in the resettlement process were the Volksdeutsche Einwandererberatungsstelle (Advisory Office for Immigrants) at Poznan, with a branch office in Berlin; the Berufseinsatzstelle (Office for Vocational Placement); the Ministry of Finance; and the Landesarbeitsamt (Regional Labor Office), given the job of immediate settlement. This office cooperated closely with the Chambers of Physicians and Lawyers, the Reichsnahrstand (Reich Food Administration), the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and the Handicraft Chamber.

The financial aspects of the transfer were handled by the Deutsche Umsiedlungs-Treuhandgesellschaft m.b.H. (DUT), created in the fall of 1939. The DUT was entrusted with (a) the liquidation of immovable property and all other financial interests left behind by German resettlers, and (b) administrative and financial duties in connection with the actual settlement on the land. Until the resettlers were permanently established, they obtained from the DUT such benefits as weekly allowances, advance payments on property left behind, and subsidies for the installation of new households.

II. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

By 1944, according to an official German broadcast,[1] the Office for the Strengthening of German Folkdom had succeeded in resettling 908,000 persons of German blood into "the safety of the Reich."

The German Volksdeutsche to be transferred by the Staff Headquarters for the Strengthening of German Folkdom were living in different sections of Europe. The first group to be resettled came from Latvia and Estonia (1939-40). It was followed by groups from Soviet-incorporated Polish provinces, (spring of 1940), from Bessarabia and Northern and Southern Bukovina (1941), and from the Soviet Black Sea area (1944).[2]

The German-annexed provinces of Poland were densely populated. In order to make room for the resettlers, a ruthless policy of depopulation and expropriation was inaugurated. Since the majority of the first resettlers were urban dwellers, the areas in these provinces initially affected were the cities. Wholesale deportation of the Jewish inhabitants, together with the Polish intellectuals, clergy, and middle class, took place, those deported being permitted to take with them only a small packet of belongings. Expropriation of their property was a regular accompaniment of their deportation. Later, the Polish farm population received the same treatment.

By the end of 1941, the relation of German to non-German undertakings in Lodz, for example, had been reversed: in 1939 only 10 percent had been German; at the close of 1941 only 10 percent were non-German.

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1. FCC: Ticker, 24 July 1944, recording DNB to the German Armed Forces.
2. Most of the remaining facts and figures given here will be found in "Transfers of Population in Europe Since 1920," R & A Report No. 2587.

The Essen National Zeitung stated that, by late 1942, all Polish trade in the incorporated area had been liquidated.

Originally it had been planned to confine resettlement of Volksdeutsche to Gau Danzig West-Preussen and the Warthegau, and to keep the Government General as a "motherland for the Poles." This policy, however, was altered to such an extent that from 1942 until the spring of 1944, the General Government was the only German-held area in Europe where the resettlement of German groups continued.

Himmler, as Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of German Folkdom, is reported to have used his authority to present high SS leaders, generally from the nobility, with estates in occupied Poland. Among those said by this report to have received estates through Himmler's office are Josias Erbprinz zu Waldeck und Pyrmont, SS Oberführer Count von Alvensleben, and General of the Waffen SS Freiherr Friedrich Karl von Ebenstein.